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ABSTRACT

The Committee which prepared this report has surveyed the present approaches of teaching reading and communication skills in the Detroit, Michigan schools. The staff has examined previous studies of the Detroit Public Schools. The staff has conducted computer searches, reviewed relevant literature, consulted with nationally known reading specialists, and noted the stories in journals and the popular press. Staff has visited each region in the school district for in-depth discussions with curriculum leaders, achievement specialists, reading specialists, and others about regional language arts programs, and their perception of needs that would improve the teaching and learning of reading and communication skills in the classroom. Staff has had discussions with teachers and students about their perceptions of how reading and communication skills could be improved in the Detroit Public Schools. Staff has attended workshops and seminars pertaining to reading and communication skills, and has talked to creative people, writers, artists, television and radio producers and directors about ways in which media could help improve instruction and learning. Two colloquia were conducted under the leadership of the Education Committee. (Author/JM)

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FDUCATION TASK FORCE

A SIGNIFICANT SUPPLEMENT TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE READING AND COMMUNICATICN SKILLS

PREPARED BY
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March 5, 1975
Revised

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PREAMBLE

In today's world of credit cards, job applications, forms, aptitude tests, written instructions and directions, those who are unable to read or communicate with his fellowman are imprisoned on an island of ignorance-- no man can be an "island" and survive in his society--forever locked out of the mainstream of his society. Reading can make the difference between life and death at the corner stop sign, or on the back of a patent medicine bottle. Communication skills can mean the difference between survival and non-survival in a downtown employment office or a hospital emergency room.

Throughout the entire history of our school system, one of its strongest commitments has been to strengthen the life chances of the student by teaching him reading and communication skills. Today it is evident that this commitment is not being fulfilled.

According to Dr. Porter, State Superintendent of Education, Michigan has 720,000 adults with less than an eighth grade education, and two thirds of this group are unable to read. Schools have failed them. Parents are angry that their children are going to school and still can't read. Employers are frustrated that young prospective employees have such poor reading and communication skills that they are unable to fill out job applications or pass simple aptitude tests, universities and colleges report that a larger number of incoming students who are poor readers will have to be rejected or college textbooks will have to be written on a junior high school level. All of these things are indications that without the necessary reading skills youngsters cannot learn other things, therefore their life chances are very limited.

In accordance with Dr. Wolfe, Superintendent of Schools, who endorses improved achievement as the District's most important objectives, the Education Committee, a subcommittee of the Detroit Education Task Force, urges that the first step towards improved achievement can be accomplished through improved reading and communication skills. The Committee believes that reading is the key to all achievement.

RESOLUTION OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

In respect for the immediate urgency that this merits, the Detroit Education Task Force submitted this Resolution to the Central Board of Education on November 26, 1974.

WHEREAS, Board members and staff will recall that the improvement of reading and communication skils has been the first priority of the Education Committee of the Education Task Force, and

WHEREAS, many months of work have been invested in understanding the dimensions of this problem, and

WHEREAS, we of the Education Task Force recognize that substantial efforts will be required to improve reading, and

WHEREAS, without an immediate, massive commitment to solving this problem, the number of sub-standard readers will continue to escalate, and

WHEREAS, reading competence continues to be of singular importance to the life chances of Detroit children and youth,

THEREFORE, the Education Task Force now recommends that the Central Board of Education adopt the improvement of reading and communication skills of children and youth as its number one priority.

THEREFORE, to that end we urge:

1) that the Detroit Board of Education mobilize the total resources of the community to assist the school system in achieving this objective;

2) that the energies of every citizen be activated in the interests of this need; and

3) that successful practices currently in place be the cornerstones upon which a comprehensive plan for achieving this objective can be built.

BACKGROUND

The Education Committee has asked itself "is it possible that our schools need to identify and solve problems linked with teaching reading and communication skills? If so, what can be done?"

The Education Committee has surveyed the present approaches of teaching reading and communication skills in our schools today. A preliminary reading statement outlining the goals, objectives and means for achieving the objectives was developed earlier by the Education Committee to stimulate discussion. The statement was shared with Central Office reading specialists, Region curriculum leaders, Region reading specialists, as well as other school officials. It was also reviewed by community people and other Region personnel at two joint meetings with the Committee at the Region level.

The staff has examined previous studies of the Detroit Public Schools. The staff has conducted computer searches, reviewed relevant literature, consulted with nationally known reading specialists, noted the stories in journals and the popular press. Staff has visited each Region for in-depth discussions with curriculum leaders, achievement specialists, reading specialists, and others about Regional language arts programs, and their perception of needs that would improve the teaching and learning of reading and communication skills in the classroom. Staff has had discussions with teachers and students as their perception of how reading and communication skills could be improved in the Detroit Public Schools. Staff has attended workshops and seminars pertaining to reading and communication skills, and staff has talked to creative people, writers, artists, television and radio producers and directors about ways media could help to improve instruction and learning. Two colloquies were conducted under the leadership of the Education Committee.

A total commitment to the development of recommendations that will help solve the problems that must be dealt with in order to improve the teaching and learning of reading and communication skills has been demonstrated by the Education Committee, the Task Force staff, and participants from the Central and Region staffs of the Detroit Public Schools. The same recommendation has been demonstrated by citizens of the private sectors who have met evenings and weekends in brainstorming and work sessions. The sincerity of the concern of the involved parties is demonstrated by one Task Force staff member's statement:

> I have a deep personal commitment to the Detroit Public Schools . . . as corny as it may sound, I thank God that I'm blessed to be in a position to give something back to a school system that has given so much to me. In a few months I will receive a Ph.D., but I was a perfect example -- almost a stereotype of the student we so often label as disadvantaged, culturally

deprived, or underprivileged child of the ghetto. I was poor and black and not expected to achieve, but through the sensitivity and concern of a handful of teachers, school did not fail me.

Because Dick and Jane didn't mean very much to the kids in my neighborhood, the library teacher would carefully choose books that would stir our imagination. I still remember the characters she brought to life in her dramatization as she read to us. One day the third grade homeroom teacher gathered up the entire class of 26 wide-eyed, welfare dressed-up kids for one of the most exciting trips of my life. We marched in two straight lines for nine blocks from the Trowbridge Elementary School to the main branch of the Detroit Public Library where we were introduced to the very friendly and welcoming librarian as being smart, wonderful, and special . . . and special we were treated. We were given a grand tour of the entire library. Then all 26 smiling little faces of us were taken into our own special room -- the Children's Room.

I was not only introduced to a library, a librarian, and some books during my elementary school days, I was also introduced to the tools I would need to build a bridge over the rapids and turbulence of the ghetto life that could have drowned me in a sea of hopelessness and failure. Self-importance was my foundation, books were my tools, and from these books my mind received the materials I needed to communicate, a bridge between me and the rest of the world. Some days I stand atop this bridge that I built, but I can still look back and see the reflection of myself in the eyes of the little kids that seem to be drowning and failing today, and I often ask myself, "Is my job really done?"

The Education Committee and staff are deeply committed to the dream of seeing that the job "is really done." As a result of the commitment, and the data gathered thus far, we have developed several initial recommendations that will help improve the achievement of reading and communication skills. The recommendations do not propose or support a specific methodology. One thing we have learned in our search is that each student is unique, that students have different learning styles, and that no single method or technique will completely eliminate the reading and communication problems of all students.

READING RECOMMENDATIONS

I. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

The Education Committee of the Education Task Force is advancing five major recommendations and a number of supportive ideas to the Central Board of Education for consideration. We are convinced that if these recommendationss are implemented and sustained, there will be major improvements in the achievement levels of Detroit Public School students in reading and communication skills. We believe that these recommendations will be the foundation of a strong, intense reading program involving the total community. We also believe that no reading program, no matter how carefully and creatively designed, is self-implementing. To succeed it must have top level commitment. The Central and Region Boards of Education, the General Superintendent, Central level Superintendents, and Region level Superintendents must demonstrate the commitment, the drive, and the insistence that the final goals and objectives of this projected reading program will be achieved. The reading program must have the strong leadership of a top level administrator who would be directly responsible to the General Superintendent. This "reading administrator" must have a total belief in the efficacy of reading, a tough spirit, ample resources, and the authority to implement and monitor change. He or she must have only one charge--one responsibility and that is to facilitate improved achievement in reading and communication skills, therefore:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION APPOINT A READING FACILITATOR FOR A PERIOD OF 3 TO 5 YEARS TO DIRECT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ALL PROGRAMS RELATING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITHIN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE READING FACILITATOR SHOULD REPORT TO THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT.

Research of the literature and a survey of other urban school systems failed to identify a model of the role the Education Committee envisions for the reading facilitator. The Education Committee perceives the reading facilitator as a top level administrator, answerable to the General Superintendent and working in concert with all the many administrative units on the Central and Region levels responsible for reading and communication skills. In addition, the reading facilitator will also work with all Educational and Supportive Service Units to ascertain that they are effectively providing the supportive services needed to implement a strong reading program.

The Central Board of Education should

- appoint a person of enormous capacity whose general philosophy, manner, style and leadership will be couched by the belief and the determination that Detroit Public School students will learn to read and communicate with skill and comprehension.

- make the reading facilitator responsible to the office of the General Superintendent. The facilitator must have the authority to convene and work cooperatively with responsible leadership from Central and Region levels to:

(1) design an organizational sub-structure or liaison system that will allow "bridging" between units (offices and departments), between Central level educational and supportive services and the Regions; between the Regions and the schools; between the school system and the community. The design must be coherent, concrete, and with clear definitions of roles and responsibility. Success of the project depends on a network of interdependent, enthusiastic, and realistic supports of the various groups that will be involved in the policy, leadership, and day-to-day operation of the reading program.

(2) design a comprehensive reading program that will use the following recommendations and successful ongoing programs as the foundation.

(3) to convene monthly to solve any problems that will prevent or threaten the success of the reading program.

- give the reading facilitator the authority to work directly with the Office Finance and Office of Federal, State and Special Programs to provide the resources necessary to implement and sustain the reading program.

- request the reading facilitator to report the state of reading and communication skills to the Central Board of Education and the public quarterly.

PROCESS STEPS

. Acceptance of the recommendation by the Central Board of Education.

. The Central Board of Education should request the General Superintendent to identify and appoint (or hire) a reading facilitator.

. The General Superintendent should convene and inform staff members on the Central and Region levels who have the major leadership responsibilities for reading and communication skills of the selection of a reading facilitator and his charge.

. Provide the facilitator with ample staffing.

- The reading facilitator and relevant staff should make plans for all the necessary implementation phases.
- Resources should be identified and budget allocations made to implement the program.
- Implementation should begin September, 1975.

II. MOBILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

In today's world schools should no longer be isolated ivory towers. They should be part of the community and the community part of the school. When the 260,000 students walk into the Detroit Public Schools on any given day, they bring the community with them. The school system must continue, and expand its cooperation with the community rather than compete with it. Today's student learns a great deal of which he feels is more relevant from the "outside world" via film, radio, television and contact with people other than "teacher" than he does in a formal school setting; and what students learn from other sources is often more meaningful, in their opinion, than what they've learned in school. In many instances school is often a place he attends because the law says he must -- and more and more youngsters are tuning out teachers and turning off schools each day. Far too many students are not motivated to learn, and they are not learning. This trend must be stopped, ways must be found to interest and motivate our children and youth to learn and the schools cannot do it alone. The schools need the help of the entire community.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MOBILIZE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IN A MASSIVE EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE READING, LISTENING, COMPREHENDING, AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS OF DETROIT.

The Detroit community is rich in human resources, it has many creative people whose talents and expertise has rarely, if ever, been used to actively support the schools except in a millage campaign. The Board should convene a group under the direction of the Reading Facilitator to secure the help of these people. Planning, implementing, coordinating, sustaining and monitoring this project will be a tremendous task.

-- the group should be the instrument for identifying and enlisting community involvement in, and support for the Detroit Public Schools Achievement Program -- especially its program in reading and communication skills.

-- the group should be the catalyst for making the entire city of Detroit a classroom and every citizen a teacher-learner.

-- the group should work closely with the school system but it should also have the freedom to work independently.

-- the group should involve key persons from the school community as well as from the general community.

-- the group should consist of representatives from the total community such as but not limited to representatives from:

- public, private, and parochial schools
- government (Federal, State, County, City)
- industry and business
- libraries
- museums and art institutes
- unions and professional organizations
- community organizations
- institutions of higher learning
- teachers and administrators
- students
- television
- radio
- film
- newspapers
- magazines
- book publishers
- photographers
- religious organizations
- block clubs

This group must be independent enough to develop its own character.

-- it should be action oriented
-- it should be student centered
-- it should blend professional and lay resources
-- it should have "guts"

The group should be composed so that it will not merely propose innovative ideas, but begin to carry them out. The ideas that follow have been generated from many sources. They are not advanced as charges to the group, they merely suggest possibilities for action. They are addressed to all ages, not just school age youngsters. They are directed to bilingual and other competency problems as well as general literacy. They cover reading, talking, comprehending, writing and listening competencies. They include responsibilities for professionals and laymen, for public and private sectors. They are devoted to building a community-wide determination to improve reading for everyone. They stress the opportunity to tap the creative potential in our midst in ways that will benefit everyone who participates. They rest on the assumption that everyone has something to give.

BUSINESS/INDUSTRY

-- divert part of advertising to public service commercials that teach "words of the week", "phase of the week".

-- print "words of the week", stories, games, puzzles on packages, bags, and wrapping paper.

-- name products so they provide useful phrases for children to learn ("Little Brown Cow" for a chocolate milk drink; "Big Bad Bob Cat" for a cereal)

-- contribute part of sign or billboard for "words of the week", motivational "phrase of the week".

-- provide large legible labels so parents can label objects and pictures for children to read.

-- sponsor children's shows on radio and television. This could start within an ongoing children's show by sponsoring a segment that teaches young children to read "the words of the week".

-- sponsor contests for ads, motivational "phrase of the week", stories, poems, scripts, songs, art etc. written by children.

-- underwrite newspapers, magazines, records, and films produced for and by children.

-- conduct scheduled tours of plants and businesses.

-- visit schools to talk about careers.

-- create local career directories.

-- display large legible labels in stores.

-- provide career information in comic book form.

-- produce films and videotapes about careers.

-- give every employee's child a book for Christmas.

-- provide buttons and flags highlighting special days, such as Martin Luther King Day, Lincoln's birthday, etc.

-- publish newspapers and magazines featuring news and articles by and about staff and their families.

-- develop reading centers for employees.

-- provide GED classes for employees.

-- sponsor public reading centers equipped with audio visual equipment and teaching machines.

develop discount "teacher" stores in collaboration with schools and universities where teachers, students, parents, etc. can purchase books, supplies, teaching games.

ADVERTISING

-- prepare and sell to their customers public service spots that teach reading.

-- convert newspaper, radio, and television ads to teaching instruments.

-- donate public service billboards (or parts of billboards) designed by children -- for instance, "words of the week", "phrase of the week".

-- turn children on to reading by creating catch words, phrases, mottoes, symbols for buttons, bumper stickers, flags, milk carton labels.

BROADCAST MASS MEDIA

-- prepare 30-second, 60-second, 15-minute, 30-minute programs to teach reading, listening, comprehension skills. Some of this could start as segments of ongoing shows.

-- create a game show for children that requires reading and listening skills. This could start as a small segment within an ongoing children's show.

-- enlist well-known TV personalities to read Sunday comics prepared for slide projection so children could read along.

-- get broadcast personalities to talk about media careers in the schools.

-- get TV and radio personalities to teach communication skills in the schools.

-- develop programs designed and produced by local children and youth.

-- produce radio drama performed by children and youth.

-- create radio and television news programs (local and national) for children; use young and adult newscasters.

-- design newspaper, magazine, radio and television classes for the schools.

-- incorporate a listening and comprehension skills test at the close of some news broadcasts.

PRINTED MASS MEDIA

-- create a metro area youth newspaper (weekly); could be an insert in the Saturday or Sunday paper.

-- introduce youngster's writing in sports, education, employment, fashion, and youth sections.

-- create a children's magazine -- by and for children.

-- sponsor writing contests.

-- assist curriculum designers to prepare newspaper studies for the schools.

-- incorporate a self-administered reading skills test in the newspaper.

AUDIO RECORDING

-- print lyrics on the sleeve or cover of records.

-- produce cassette tapes of stories read by children's heroes.

-- produce story albums from scripts written by senior citizens for children.

-- produce albums of original songs and lyrics by children or for children.

-- develop -- with educators -- records and tapes as teaching aids to accompany bilingual books.

FILM/VIDEOTAPE

-- develop film festivals of films made by and for children.

-- produce and distribute videotapes produced by children.

ONGOING CHILDREN AND YOUTH SHOWS

-- devote a segment of each show to lessons in reading.

-- devote a segment of each show to reading a comic strip prepared on slides so children can read along.

-- carry out contests for children who read the most books. Interview them on the program. Get them on network programs.

-- carry out contests for children who tutor the most other children. Get them on local and national TV.

-- carry out contests for preschool and first-grade children who learn the most words. Get them on local and national TV.

PERFORMING ARTISTS

-- perform on records, in plays, films, on radio and television for children.

-- perform in person for and with students in schools, churches, centers, etc.

-- perform in original television shows.

-- go to schools and talk about careers.

-- teach students performing skills.

-- organize seminars and workshops to share ethnic music, art, dance with students.

-- research the history of local performers with students and create articles, books, film videotapes, radio and television with the information.

-- write direction sheets and books for children.

-- conduct seminars and workshops on building homemade instruments.

WRITERS

-- serve as consultants or adult models for students.

-- sponsor scriptwriting contests for radio and television programs. The winning programs produced and broadcast on commercial TV and radio station. Scripts by children, youth or adults.

-- prepare comic books and comic strips.

-- write parent and tutor guides to help children develop skills in reading, listening, and speaking.

-- write second language comic books and comic strips.

-- write reading, listening, and communication songs.

-- write motivational reading poems and limericks.

ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN

-- select or produce guides for listening and appreciating.

-- illustrate books for children.

-- prepare slides (including originals) for the reading of the Sunday comics on TV.

-- help create new games to teach talking, listening, and reading skills.

-- assist art institutes and museums to provide colorful information booklets written in simple language for children.

-- submit colorful ideas to improve the physical learning environment of schools.

-- create paintings, sculpture, murals for schools and public institutions.

-- teach children and youth design techniques.

-- teach teachers and community folk how to create colorful displays and exhibits.

-- organize workshops to teach parents to construct instructional games and toys.

-- organize a cadre of craftsmen to build and decorate reading rooms.

-- build storage space for books.

EDUCATORS

-- assess the schools and community and develop a talent bank of volunteers.

-- develop a city-wide volunteer program or tutoring programs, such as "The Bucket Brigade."

-- develop discussion guides and manuals for quality programs, such as "The Autobiography of Mrs. Jane Pittman," "Civilization", and "Wives of Henry VIII."

-- write parent and tutor guides for helping children develop skills in reading, listening and speaking.

-- assess the available resources and develop a learning resources catalog.

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES

-- develop an internship and/or student teaching program that includes at least one semester of work in a non-school setting teaching reading and communications.

-- train student volunteers to tutor in the schools or other centers. Secure federal or state grants to support such training.

-- publish paperbacks written for and/or by children.

-- develop courses to improve the teaching of reading and communication for teachers, administrators and non-professionals.

-- develop mobile teaching centers equipped with programmed instruction, etc.

-- provide pre-service training in basic skills in photography, videotaping skills, etc.

PROVIDE RESOURCE CENTERS TO:

-- bring together school personnel to share ideas, problems, and support.

-- stimulate the development of ideas and programs based on the identified needs and resources of the local school by serving as a center for information on resources, ideas, support and planning.

-- provide multi-media presentations and hands on materials displays, manipulatives, hardware, and software where teachers will be able to examine in depth the materials in the resource display and information areas.

-- function as an in-service training facility in the use of immovative materials and educational methods so that curriculum planning, study and development by individuals or groups of Title I teachers, can be carried on with appropriate curriculum materials readily available by organizing seminars and workshops in relevant areas to be held in the Center.

GOVERNMENT

-- convert city, metro, school and cross-country buses into learning laboratories.

-- install community homework/media centers in mini police stations, mini City Hall, or neighborhood service centers.

-- provide funds for equipment and services for remedial and bilingual reading courses.

PARENTS, PUBLIC SERVICE GROUPS, NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS, BLOCK CLUBS

-- label objects and pictures with names for preschoolers and primary students to read.

-- conduct reading contests with rewards to child who learns the most words. Get winners on local and national children's shows.

-- conduct reading contests in cooperation with the public library with rewards to youngsters who read the most books. Get winners on local and national children's shows.

-- provide opportunities for Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to earn merit badges in tutoring, making instructional games, carrying out instructional contests. Get winners on radio and TV talk shows.

-- encourage Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to earn merit badges in scholarship.

-- provide neighborhood homework centers.

-- establish community reading materials exchanges or deposits (located in churches, libraries, YMCA, mini City Hall, school).

-- enlist senior citizens for storytelling.

-- take children on trips to plays, to concerts, etc.

-- volunteer to tutor homebound students.

-- volunteer to tutor reading in neighborhood schools.

-- provide babysitting service so parents can attend schools.

-- buy supplies.

-- create puppet shows -- written and performed by youngsters.

-- organize workshops to make games and toys to teach skills.

<u>PROCESS STEPS</u>

. Acceptance of the recommendation by the Central Board of Education.

. The Board of Education should authorize the General Superintendent and staff, under the direction of the Reading Facilitator, to design the model and to spell out its charge.

- Convene and inform the staff members who have major leadership responsibilities at the Central and Regional levels.

- The group leadership should be decided. The leadership should be exerted at the right level of authority, responsibility and control. The leadership team should be represented by the Reading Facilitator and a highly respected community person with expertise in media (if possible) and administration.

- Select the participants.

- Inform the press.

- The Board of Education should convene the group by May, 1975. If the project is to be successful the consortium has to be a careful blend of students, teachers, administrators, creative professionals and laymen, government officials, elected officials and community people.

- The group should plan a city-wide support and coordinating system.

- The group should begin functioning in September. For example, a pilot project might be to launch Dr. Ed Coleman's media campaign -- "I Can Read Week." In addition, a contest to name the project could be initiated.

III. IMPROVING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The "environment", simply stated, is the circumstances, objects or conditions by which man is surrounded. The Education Committee is deeply concerned with the environment that surrounds the students in our schools. Too many of our schools are unsafe, noisy, uncomfortable and unattractive. Far too many of our administrators and teachers believe that our students are uneducable for reasons of race, cultural or ethnic differences, cognitive deficit, environmental handicaps or other factors (most often societal) external to the school, and that the Detroit Public Schools have limited responsibility to achieve learning because of these obstacles.

Research tells us that the physical and emotional environment of a school and/or classroom can motivate, support or negate a student's ability to learn in spite of "external" factors. We also know that schools can be changed to provide a comfortable physical setting more conducive to learning as well as change the attitudes of educational personnel to provide a supportive emotional environment.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST EACH SCHOOL IN DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORTS AND NURTURES LEARNING TO READ AND TO COMMUNICATE.

There are some basic needs that must be provided for in a supportive environment.

-- schools must be safe

-- schools must be free of vandalism and theft

-- schools should have a comfortable climate, a tolerable noise level, enough light, and a pleasant decor

-- schools must be staffed with educational personnel who believe their students can achieve

-- schools must be staffed with educational personnel who respect and are concerned about the students, parents and their school community and can work cooperatively with students, parent groups and community councils.

-- schools should receive ample resources to implement change.

The first priority in providing a supportive learning environment is the provision of a safe school that is also free of vandalism and theft. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place where there is fear for one's person or property. The Board of Education, the City of Detroit, and other relevant Federal, State and County government agencies, community organizations, educational personnel, parents and students must collaborate in solving this complex problem.

Each school's School Community Council (or an ad hoc committee) should spell out specific objectives and expectations in the attainment of a safe school that is also free of vandalism and theft.

-- it must suggest general directions and concrete ways in which these objectives can be pursued, attained and sustained.

-- it must suggest methods of evaluating and monitoring the progress.

-- it must provide a reasonable time table for the attainment of a safe school -- free of vandalism and theft.

The provision of a comfortable climate, a tolerable noise level, enough light and a pleasant decor is more complex than it appears, because to make a building or classroom functional for the majority of the inhabitants require concentrated thought about the people who inhabit that space. The Office of School Housing should work very closely with individual schools, paying careful attention to their idiosyncrasies, and allowing them (within the budget) to make choices that are appropriate to their needs. The Schools and Office of School Housing should also work very closely in seeking out community resources in order to provide the means to update and improve the physical environment of the Detroit Public Schools.

The administration of each school should form groups or committees, representing the educational personnel, students, parents, spaces and things in their school. School buildings should not be looked upon as monumental but as places for people. They should say in every way that they exist to serve the people in them.

-- learning resource centers should be developed to make the tools of learning easily available and should invite hands on use.

-- spaces should be changeable, furniture movable to provide for large groups, small groups, individuals

-- there should be displays of students' work to show their presence in the building, and to help build their sense of identity by reflecting who they are and how they are doing

-- schools should provide personal spaces for inhabitants to be alone and separate from group pressures, to work, to store, and retrieve information and tools gathered for projects in progress.

-- spaces should not be crowded. The number of students in a class is important, especially where students are having achievement problems. At best, it is difficult to learn in a crowded, uncomfortable space

-- provisions should be made for people in a variety of natural postures: sitting up straight, lounging, leaning, perching, standing, by offering a variety of seating (including the floor), and work-surface heights to accommodate them.

-- furniture should be allowed to be worn, used up and renewed.

-- provisions should be made to involve students whenever possible with adults in hands on activity, such as painting walls, making decorative murals, making furniture (such as soft pillows, snake couches, pre-school furnishings, bookcases, etc.), keeping the grounds clean, planting shrubs, flowers, decorating trash cans, and outdoor benches, etc.

The emotional psychological environment in which students function is equally important, if not more important than the physical environment. Research of the literature emphatically supports that the learning potential of normal students can be positively or negatively affected by a number of stimuli, such as adult (especially teachers) expectations, encouragement or discouragement, acceptance or rejection, compassion, or humiliation. If adults communicate to a student, directly or subtly, that he is unable to, and is not expected to learn, he usually will not learn. The Education Committee believes that the self-fulfilling prophecy plays an important role in the widespread academic retardation of many of our students in reading and communication skills. Postman and Weingartner state in "Teaching as a Subversive Activity," that:

> The beliefs, feelings, and assumptions of teachers are the air of a learning environment; they determine the quality of life within it. When the air is polluted, the student is poisoned, unless, of course, he holds his breath (not breathing is widely used by students as a defense against intellectual poison, but it mostly results, as you can imagine, in suicide by suffocation).

Research assures us that the attitudes and behavior of teachers (and other educational personnel) can be modified to create a supportive environment for students, therefore --

-- intensive, hardhitting, mandatory workshops and/or seminars should be developed and initiated by the Office of Curriculum and Staff Development to improve or change negative (harmful) attitudes of educational personnel.

-- personnel whose negative behavior cannot be changed and whose actions are harmful to students (and in the case of administrators harmful to teachers) should be placed in an alternative situation.

-- educational personnel should receive mandatory orientation to the demography of the City of Detroit, the Detroit Public Schools, the Regions, and the specific school/community to which they are assigned.

-- individual regional school boards and staff, and school staff and community councils should follow up centrally sponsored workshops and seminars by developing plans to obtain positive attitudinal changes not only in the staff, but also students and the community. These cooperatively developed goals and objectives should be built on the positive aspects of each region, school and community and the people they serve.

-- teachers should be involved in decision-making processes that relate to school goals and objectives, curriculum, scheduling and selection of materials.

-- teachers should have more flexibility organizing their rooms to reflect the teaching styles most comfortable to them, in addition, they should be involved in the selection of students placed in their classrooms in order to match the learning styles of students with teaching styles.

-- ways must be found to "reward" and encourage dedicated educational personnel (especially teachers) who perform at superior levels.

-- ways must be found to compensate teachers for working in "difficult" teaching positions.

-- teachers and other educational personnel should continue to cooperate fully in their support of the Achievement Program.

-- special help must be given teachers to cope with bilingual needs of students.

PROCESS STEPS

1. Acceptance of the recommendation by the Central Board of Education.

2. The Board of Education should request the Superintendent to direct the Reading Facilitator to convene the staff members who have major leadership responsibilities at the Central and Regional levels to create the process by which a cooperative plan can be developed to implement this recommendation.

3. These meetings should be convened as soon as possible, and plans and implementations phases decided.

4. Resources and budget to implement the program should be identified and distributed in a manner that will provide equal educational opportunities -- compensating schools with the greatest need for change.

5. This recommendation should begin implementation no later than September, 1975.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If there is one single important factor, other than the student himself, which determines the success or failure in improving students reading and communication skills, it is the critical role of the teacher.* The suggestions and recommendations offered will contribute to improve learning, only insofar as they contribute to and support the effectiveness of the classroom teacher. The Education Committee believes that every effort must be made to increase professional competence, personal confidence, and sustained effectiveness in teaching. The Committee intends the recommendation to include the professional development of all staff members. Everyone who works for the Detroit Public Schools is part of the "team," however, the role of the teacher is most critical.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION EXPAND THE DEVELOPMENT OF, AND SUSTAIN AN INTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR ALL PERSONNEL.

There must be high administrative expectations of teacher performance related to student achievement in reading and communication skills. In order to get teachers motivated to perform at their greatest capacities, the Detroit Public Schools must create a professional development program that will raise the status, prestige and effectiveness of its teachers. This cannot be done by merely upgrading the economic status, nor can it be done by emotional appeals for self-sacrifice, dedication, sensitivity to social problems and so forth on the part of teachers. Change will only come about through careful, systematic development of action-oriented programs that will provide:

- improved preservice training
- improved inservice training
- dignified and professional (non-threatening) supervision
- improved, dignified, healthy, positive relationships between teachers and students, superivisors, administrators, aides, parents and other significant adults.
- career development, differential staffing and a method to reward teachers in terms of their training, objective evaluations, and demonstratable performance, as indicated by the academic growth of their students.

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*Meaning teachers, educational aides, student teachers, tutors etc.

The Detroit Board of Education should provide for the expansion of the fine services offered by the Professional Growth Center and the various supervisory activities by:

- exploring ways to provide release time for inservice training and staff planning during the school day.

- providing permanent staff development and resource centers with sufficient funds and personnel for the inservice training of all teachers, but specifically marginal teachers and teachers without competency in teaching reading and communication skills on central and regional level. In addition the Resource Center would provide:

  (1) training in the use of standard methodology as well as innovative materials and educational methods.

  (2) stimulate the ideas and programs based on the identified needs and resources of the local school by serving as a center for information on resources, ideas, support and planning.

  (3) bring together school personnel to share ideas, problems and support.

- inviting appropriate representatives from universities and teacher training institutions in the metropolitan Detroit area to a series of conferences and/or seminars to jointly examine the existing preservice courses and inservice programs relative to reading and communication skills, in order to work cooperatively to improve preservice and inservice training of teachers in these content areas.

- requesting that all publishers of reading programs or series producers of software and producers of hardware used in the Detroit Public Schools provide indepth workshops and seminars on the use of their products for educational personnel.

- requesting Wayne County Intermediate School Districts Superintendent of Education to provide a special report on ways it can help teachers develop the skills and knowledge they need to improve their performance in teaching reading and communication skills.

- involving teachers in planning

- carefully assess the skills of staff to provide a "talent" resource bank for workshop leaders and consultants.

- carefully assessing teacher workshop requests.

- including administrators in workshops and seminars whenever possible.

- looking carefully at the potential expanded use of technology (TV, radio, film, microfilms, computers, phonograph records, audio tapes, video tapes etc.) by teachers as teaching aides.

- training teachers and administrators in production techniques and the use of videotape, film, audio tapes etc.

PROCESS STEPS

. Acceptance of the recommendation by the Central Board of Education.

. The Central Board of Education should request the General Superintendent to direct the Reading Facilitator to convene and inform the staff members who have the major leadership responsibilities for the professional development of teachers on the central and regional levels. The General Superintendent should invite appropriate representatives from universities and teacher training institutions to a series of conferences or seminars to deal with professional development of educational personnel.

. A planning team made up of Public School and university supervisors, administrators and teachers should be appointed by the responsible supervisory leaders at the central and regional levels.

. Resources should be identified and budget allocations made.

. Central and region level implementation teams should be formed.

. Staff assessment should be made to identify the curriculum content of workshops, seminars, or classes desired by staff.

. Personnel for the Resource Centers should be identified.

. Housing facilities for the Resource Centers should be identified at the central and region level and basic equipment and supplies ordered.

. The modified Professional Development Program should begin implementation, September, 1975.

V. EDUCATIONAL AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Philosophically it is assumed that the Detroit Public Schools are built and maintained for students. They are supposedly places of learning that exist for one reason only - to educate kids. Every thought, every function, every action, of every person, in every position in the schools should be motivated by the belief that it will help provide the best education possible for every student enrolled in our system. Specifically each administrative and operational function of the Detroit Public Schools is a supportive service that should relate directly to students and student achievement, however this is not always the case, there are administrative and operational functions that appear to be self-serving from the perspective of many administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other community groups. Far too many of our students and parents perceive our schools as just one more "ivory-tower," cold hearted institution that holds no promise for them. On talking to a group of high school students visiting the ETF offices, an eleventh grade youngster blurted out that:

> The whole thing 'bout schools being for us - is a big lie. Its for the folks that run them. Them dudes settin up there in them offices and the teachers messin over us in school don't care nothin about us. They only look out for themselves. If they didn't get money for us - or know somethin else to do with us- we wouldn't even be around.

The Education Committee believes that in far too many instances this youngster's statement is very descriptive of the situation in the Detroit Public Schools. After visiting with many students, teachers, curriculum specialists, achievement specialists, teacher aides, student teachers, principals, janitors and parents, staff was left with many sad but important pieces of a total picture.

- junior and senior high school students laughingly told of consistently smoking pot in the classrooms of those teachers who are so uneducated about drug abuse that they are completely naive to even the odor of marjuana.

- Regional Achievement Specialist, after making months of unsuccessful calls to higher level administrators, hopefully talked to an Education Task Force staff member in a last cry for help in breaking through the bottleneck of lengthy red tape that deterred the deliverance of much needed student equipment for periods as long as two years.

- Concerned Detroit Federation of Teachers President, Mary E. Riordan, frustrated teachers, and failing students spoke to the Education Task Force staff in regards to books and other supplies too often being delivered several months after school has started.

- For ten years Pudgy was the smartest boy in his class. He read many books. His vocabulary was extraordinary. At the age of eleven years, Pudgy became emotionally disturbed. He stayed home from school a year, and during this time his principal and his mother unsuccessfully begged Detroit Public School personnel for key information leading to "emergency" professional attention for Pudgy. This information was never delivered. Such is the case with many welfare children in our schools who happen to fall in need of psychiatric attention.

- The Detroit Public Schools sent Paul and Donny home from school. The reason was that the two elementary school age brothers were mentally retarded. Three years passed during which their parents struggled desperately to get them in a school setting equipped to teach retarded children how to read and talk. During these years the parents heard not a word from the Detroit Public Schools. They stated,...."not even a question about the whereabouts of Paul and Donny was asked since the day they were sent home from school. "

These are only a few of the illustrations that serve in painting for the Education Committee, the same picture that was described by the eleventh grade student visiting the Education Task Force office. The Education Committee believes that the Detroit Public Schools should be provided and maintained for students. Further we believe that the schools have a professional and moral obligation to provide the supportive services that will facilitate improved achievement of all students especially in the ability to read and communicate with skill and comprehension.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION REVIEW ITS CADRE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL, CLASSROOM TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS, WITH PRIMARY EMPHASIS ON IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING THOSE SERVICES WHICH WILL ASSURE THE DELIVERY AND DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS, INFORMATION, AND PERSONAL SERVICES TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

In looking at the organizational charts, for educational and supportive services, the Committee believes that the mechanics for providing these services are already there. But where is the commitment for these many offices and departments staffed with persons in high ranking positions to work together so that the needed services will flow and filter down to the highest ranking persons in the entire school system - the students?

Within an organizational structure that affords upwards of 56 administrative units (offices and divisions) as well as a staff of 20,617, the Detroit Public Schools should be able to bring about dynamic improvement in its ability to provide superior educational and supportive services for teachers and students in the thrust for massive gains in the achievement levels of reading and communication skills.

ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

- management should be service oriented The "Report of Superintendent's Committee on Achievement" states that Central office units have responsibilities similar to those of region offices in that it is their job to facilitate the work of local schools.

- evaluation and city-wide monitoring of the effectiveness of management must be continuous.

- it will be the responsibility of management to continuously sort out the issues that require union contract modification. Management should always act as advocates of what's best for pupils.

- thought should be given to exploring new organizational methods of grouping and teaching kids - provision should be made for alternative schools - learning centers (grouping some school programs such as computer reading programs), demonstration schools when special equipment and/or teaching skills are needed.

- thought should be given to exploring ways to secure persons with specialized talents and competencies such as poets and writers for specific periods from sources other than universities and teacher training institutions.

- management should develop procedures to consolidate state and local testing programs.

- management should develop uniform methods and forms of reporting progress, such as testing, cumulative folder materials.

- management should constantly audit the evidence of communication competencies through external sources.

- management should develop budgets according to the recommendations and needs of the local schools, in addition, greater allocation of funds should be sought from the city, county, state, and federal government sources.

- the General Superintendent should report a "state of the schools' semi-annually.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

- definite plans for improving and monitoring the delivery of equipment and supplies to the schools must be implemented. The current situation is intolerable. It may be necessary to seek the help of outside consultants to plan immediate improvement or perhaps the Board of Education should explore the possibility of subcontracting this operation out to a private concern.

- provisions should be made for "next day" deliveries or same day pickup facilities for certain categories of staff and pupil supplies.

- representative technicians and engineers should be given release time to attend at least one major technical/engineering conference a year, in addition, mandatory seminars and workshops should be conducted to keep them updated.

- a concerted effort should be made to recruit minorities into the technical and engineering ranks of the Detroit Public Schools.

- equipment and supplies should reflect the educational plans and meet the needs of the students.

- selection of equipment must be more flexible - change must come about at an accelerated pace.

- the Board of Education should request "hands on" training for teachers, administrators from hardware vendors, consultants, or the technical staff to assure that educational personnel knows how to properly utilize equipment.

HUMAN NEEDS

- the Board of Eduation should develop a strong advocacy position that protects the rights of children and youth, in addition, it should provide the support system needed to maintain good physical and emotional health.

- the various units involved in pupil services should cooperatively develop a systematic plan to service children and youth. In addition they should build a strong-permanent liason with city, county, state and federal agencies that will guarantee students the services they need because social, economic, physical, and psychological problems can drastically effect achievement.

- the Board of Education should continue and expand its strong support services which meet the needs in the physical and psychological personnel.

INFORMATION: RETRIEVAL AND DISSEMINATION

- the units involved in providing the retrieval or dissemination of information: (children museum. Audio Visual Library. Computer Services . Educational Broadcasting . Audio Visual Education . Audio Visual - Technical Service . School and Professional Libraries . Curriculum Laboratories . Audio Visual Engineering . Data Processing) should form an Instructional Technology Committee with central and regional input to coordinate their efforts.

- serious consideration should be given to improving and expanding the Data Processing System to service the needs of the Detroit Public Schools in management and curriculum. Planning teams should visit the sites of effective systems such as the Total Information Educational Systems in the Minnesota School District.

- the professional library facilities and services should be updated and expanded.

- school libraries should be developed into media/learning centers.

- Educational Broadcasting should develop a philosophy and a plan designed to improve programming; and to improve and expand the facilities.

- the Board of Education should actively seek minority personnel to fill vacancies at Educational Broadcasting.

- the Curriculum Laboratories should be improved and expanded. Both facilities (School Center Building and Stevenson Building) should be city-wide.

- the Children's Museum functions are unique. The operation should have the same autonomy as Educational Broadcasting.

- the Children's Museum and "The Friends of the Children's Museum" should receive greater commitment from the Board of Education in its drive to raise funds to build new facilities and to expand its program.

- a viable ethnic studies program should be housed in the projected new Children's Museum facility.

PROCESS STEPS

. Acceptance of the recommendation by the Central Board of Education .

. Direct the General Superintendent to direct the Reading Facilitator to convene the staff members who have major leadership responsibilities at the central and regional levels to create the process by which a cooperative plan can be developed to implement this recommendation.

. An "Instructional Technology Committee" should be formed to plan, coordinate and evaluate functions of all the various components in collaboration with other Educational and Service units.

. The meetings should convene as soon as possible.

. Many funding sources must be explored to obtain the necessary monies to fund this recommendation.

. Possible implementaiton phases should begin when plans are finalized.

. Evaluation and monitoring should be established.

CONCLUSION

The Education Committee has not proposed or selected a specific reading methodology. We view that as the responsibility of the professional staff. The Committee endorsed the Report of Superintendent's Committee on Achievement when it was introduced. The Achievement Program is operative and our survey of its progress leads us to enthusiastically support the program. The Achievement Report should continue to be the model to systematically improve achievement in reading and communication skills in the Detroit Public Schools. The recommendations in this paper are intended to be supportive of the Achievement Program.

In our search for clues to improve reading and communication skills, effective programs were observed in some schools, in some regions, but good programs are far too few.

The Education Committee is greatly appreciative for the outstanding cooperation of the Central and Region level staff members of the Detroit Public Schools. We are especially grateful for the help of the teachers, principals, curriculum specialists, language arts specialists, Central and Region level Superintendents who gave up several Sunday afternoons to meet with the Education Task Force staff to candidly discuss, offer possible solutions, share their expertise to solve problems related to the teaching and learning of reading and communication skills. In addition, they met to react to the reading recommendations in draft form.

EDUCATION TASK FORCE

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March 25, 1975

MEMORANDUM TO: The Detroit Central Board of Education

FROM: The Education Task Force

RE: Reading Recommendations

We, the members of the Education Task Force, are advancing five major recommendations to the Central Board of Education for consideration. We are convinced that if these recommendations are implemented and sustained, there will be a major improvement in the achievement level of Detroit Public School students in reading and communication skills. We believe that these recommendations will be the foundation of a strong, intensive reading program involving the total community.

No matter how carefully and creatively designed, a reading program is not self-implementing. To succeed it must have top level commitment. The Central and Regional Boards of Education, the General Superintendent, Central administrators and Regional Superintendents must demonstrate the commitment, the drive and the insistence that the final goals and objectives of this projected reading program will be achieved.

It is intended that the implementation of these recommendations will be based essentially upon the reallocation of existing resources. However, when important needs cannot be met through reallocation, additional resources shall be sought to improve reading and communication skills of children and youth in Detroit.

I. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION APPOINT A READING FACILITATOR FOR A PERIOD OF 3 TO 5 YEARS TO DIRECT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ALL PROGRAMS RELATING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITHIN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE READING FACILITATOR SHOULD REPORT TO THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, WHO SHALL REPORT TO THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT.

II. MOBILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MOBILIZE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IN A MASSIVE EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS OF DETROIT.

III. IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST EACH SCHOOL IN DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORTS AND NURTURES LEARNING TO READ AND COMMUNICATE.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION EXPAND AND SUSTAIN AN INTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR ALL PERSONNEL TO IMPROVE READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

V. EDUCATIONAL AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION REVIEW ITS CADRE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL, CLASSROOM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS, WITH EMPHASIS ON IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING THOSE SERVICES WHICH WILL GUARANTEE THE DELIVERY AND DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS, INFORMATION AND PERSONAL SERVICES TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

jt
3/13/75

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March 25, 1975

EDUCATION TASK FORCE

DESCRIPTION OF READING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education Task Force is forwarding the following recommendations to the Central Board of Education for implementation.

PREAMBLE

In today's world of credit cards, job applications, forms, aptitude tests, written instructions and directions, those who are unable to read or communicate with their fellowmen are imprisoned on islands of ignorance. No man can be an island and survive, forever locked out of the mainstream of his society. Reading can make the difference between life and death at the corner stop sign or on the back of a patent medicine bottle. Communication skill can mean the difference between survival and non-survival in a downtown employment office or a hospital emergency room.

The Detroit Public School system has a long history of commitment to the teaching of reading and communication skills as a means of improving the life chances of students. It is evident today that this commitment is not being fulfilled.

According to Dr. John W. Porter, Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, there are 720,000 adults in Michigan with less than an eighth grade education. Two-thirds of this group are unable to read. The schools have failed them. Parents are angry that their children are going to school and still cannot read. Employers are frustrated that young prospective employees have such poor reading and communication skills that they are unable to fill out job applications or pass simple aptitude tests. Universities and colleges report that an increasing number of prospective students who are poor readers will be rejected or college textbooks must be rewritten on the junior high school level. All of these things are indications that without the necessary reading skills youngsters cannot learn; therefore, their life chances are very limited.

In accordance with Dr. Charles J. Wolfe, General Superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools, who endorses improved achievement as the District's most important objective, the Education Committee, a committee of the Detroit Education Task Force, urges that the first step toward improved achievement is improved reading and

communication skills. The Committee believes that reading is the key to all achievement.

The Detroit Education Task Force submitted a resolution to the Central Board of Education on November 26, 1974 requesting that the Board's first priority be the improvement of reading and communication skills for all students.

We, the members of the Education Task Force, are advancing five major recommendations to the Central Board of Education for consideration. We are convinced that if these recommendations are implemented and sustained, there will be a major improvement in the achievement level of Detroit Public School students in reading and communication skills. We believe that these recommendations will be the foundation of a strong, intensive reading program involving the total community.

No matter how carefully and creatively designed, a reading program is not self-implementing. To succeed it must have top level commitment. The Central and Regional Boards of Education, the General Superintendent, Central administrators and Regional Superintendents must demonstrate the commitment, the drive and the insistence that the final goals and objectives of this projected reading program will be achieved.

It is intended that the implementation of these recommendations will be based essentially upon the reallocation of existing resources. However, when important needs cannot be met through reallocation, additional resources shall be sought to improve reading and communication skills of children and youth in Detroit.

I. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION APPOINT A READING FACILITATOR FOR A PERIOD OF 3 TO 5 YEARS TO DIRECT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ALL PROGRAMS RELATING TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITHIN THE DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE READING FACILITATOR SHOULD REPORT TO THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, WHO SHALL REPORT TO THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT.

RATIONALE

The reading program requires the strong leadership of a top level administrator who would be directly responsible to the Deputy Superintendent of the Division of Educational Services. This reading facilitator must have total belief in the importance of reading, a tough spirit, ample resources and the authority to implement and monitor change.

This person will have only one responsibility--to facilitate improved achievement in reading and communication skills. An extensive survey failed to identify a model envisioned by the Education Committee for the reading facilitator. The Education Committee perceives the reading facilitator as a top level administrator who will work in concert with the many administrative units on the Central and Regional levels responsible for reading and communication skills. The reading facilitator will monitor both Educational and Supportive Service divisions to ensure that they are providing the supportive services needed to implement a strong reading program.

II. MOBILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MOBILIZE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IN A MASSIVE EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS OF DETROIT.

RATIONALE

In today's world, schools cannot be isolated ivory towers. They must be part of the community and the community part of the school. When 260,000 students walk into the Detroit Public Schools on any given day, they bring the community with them. The school system must expand its cooperation with the community rather than compete with it. Today's student learns a great deal more via film, radio, television and contact with people other than teachers that he feels is relevant to him than he does in a formal school setting. In many instances, school is a place he attends because the law says he must, and more and more youngsters are tuning out teachers and turning off schools. Far too many students are not motivated to learn in school settings; therefore, they are not learning. This trend must be stopped. Ways must be found to interest and motivate our children and youth to learn. The schools cannot do this alone. The help of the entire community is needed.

The Detroit community is rich in human resources. It has many creative people whose talents and expertise have rarely, if ever, been used to support the schools except in millage campaigns. The Board should convene a group to design a method to seek the active support of these people.

Planning, implementing, coordinating, sustaining and monitoring this project will be a tremendous task.

III. IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST EACH SCHOOL IN DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORTS AND NURTURES LEARNING TO READ AND COMMUNICATE.

RATIONALE

Simply stated, the environment is composed of the circumstances, objects or conditions by which man is surrounded. The Education Committee is deeply concerned about the school environment. Many of our schools are unsafe, noisy, uncomfortable and unattractive. Far too many of our administrators and teachers believe that the Detroit Public Schools have limited responsibility to achieve learning because they view students as ineducable for reasons of race, cultural or ethnic differences, cognitive deficit, environmental handicaps, or other factors (most often societal) external to the school.

Research tells us that the physical and emotional environment of a school and/or classroom can motivate, support or negate a student's ability to learn in spite of external factors. We also know that schools can be changed to provide a comfortable physical setting more conducive to learning. Such settings can assist in changing the attitudes of educational personnel.

There are some basic needs that must be provided for in a supportive environment.

- Schools must be safe
- Schools must be free from vandalism and theft
- Schools must have a comfortable climate, a tolerable noise level, enough light and a pleasant decor
- Schools must be staffed with educational personnel who believe their students can achieve
- Schools must be staffed with educational personnel who respect and are concerned about the students, parents and their school community and can work cooperatively with students, parent groups and community councils.
- Schools must receive ample resources to implement change.

IV. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION EXPAND AND SUSTAIN AN INTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR ALL PERSONNEL TO IMPROVE READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

RATIONALE

If there is a single important factor, other than the student himself, which determines success or failure in improving students' reading and communication skills, it is the role of those involved in the teaching of reading.* The suggestions and recommendations offered will improve learning only insofar as they contribute to and support the effectiveness of the classroom teacher. The Education Task Force believes that every effort must be made to increase professional competence, personal confidence and sustained effectiveness in teaching. It is the intent of the Task Force that this recommendation include all staff members. Every employee of the Detroit Public Schools is part of the team, but the classroom teacher is critical.

There must be high administrative expectations of teacher performance related to student achievement in reading and communication skills. In order to get teachers motivated to perform at their greatest capacities, the Detroit Public Schools must nurture a professional development program that will raise the status, prestige and effectiveness of its teachers. This cannot be done by merely upgrading economic status nor can it be accomplished by emotional appeals for self-sacrifice, dedication and sensitivity to social problems. Change will only come about through careful, systematic development of action-oriented programs.

V. EDUCATIONAL AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF EDUCATION REVIEW ITS CADRE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL, CLASSROOM TEACHERS AND STUDENTS, WITH EMPHASIS ON IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING THOSE SERVICES WHICH WILL GUARANTEE THE DELIVERY AND DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS, INFORMATION AND PERSONAL SERVICES TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

RATIONALE

Philosophically, it is assumed that the Detroit Public Schools are built and maintained for students. They are supposedly places of learning that exist for one reason only--to educate kids. Every thought, every

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*Meaning teachers, educational aides, student teachers, tutors, etc.

function and every action of every person in every position in the schools should be motivated by its contribution to providing the best education possible for every student enrolled in our system. Specifically, each administrative and operational function of the Detroit Public Schools is a supportive service that should relate directly to students and student achievement. However, this is not always the case. There are administrative and operational functions that appear to be self-serving from the perspective of many administrators, teachers, students, parents and other community groups. Many students and parents perceive the schools as one more ivory tower or cold-hearted institution that holds no promise for them.

The Education Task Force believes that the schools have a professional and moral obligation to provide the supportive services that will facilitate improved achievement of all students, especially in their ability to read and communicate with skill and comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The Education Task Force has not proposed or selected a specific reading methodology. We view that as the responsibility of the professional staff. The Task Force endorsed the "Report of the Superintendent's Committee on Achievement" when it was introduced. The Achievement Program is operative and our survey of its progress leads us to support the program enthusiastically. The Achievement Report should continue to be the model to improve achievement in reading and communication skills in the Detroit Public Schools. These recommendations are supportive of the Achievement Program.

In our search for clues to improve reading and communication skills, effective programs were observed in some schools, but good programs are far too few.

In addition to this document, the Education Committee has prepared a paper called "A Significant Supplement to the Recommendations to Improve Reading and Communication Skills," which offers some supportive ideas.

The Education Task Force is greatly appreciative of the outstanding cooperation of Central and Regional staff members of the Detroit Public Schools. We are especially grateful for the help of those teachers, principals, curriculum specialists, language arts specialists and Central and Regional administrators who gave up several Sunday afternoons to work with the Education Committee staff. They shared their expertise in the candid exploration of possible solutions to problems related to the teaching and learning of reading and communication skills. We believe this cooperation illustrates the potential for a system-wide and community-wide effort to improve reading and communication skills for every student in the Detroit Public Schools.

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